1. Why does this certification program exist?

The certification program GreenSign Office v. 1.1 sets forth, in a structured catalog of criteria, the requirements in the areas of ecology, economy, and social responsibility that must be met for the sustainable management of an organization, as well as the evidence required to demonstrate compliance with these requirements.

Successful certification under the GreenSign Office v. 1.1 certification program demonstrates that, at the time of the audit, an organization meets the minimum requirements defined in the certification program and that compliance has been verified by an independent certification body based on evidence.

The certificate thus confirms the organization's conformity with the requirements specified in the GreenSign Office v. 1.1 certification program based on a structured conformity assessment procedure and states:

> "With the grant of this certificate, the certified organization has provided evidence that it is managed in a sustainable manner—ecologically, economically, and socially—in accordance with the requirements of the GreenSign Office v. 1.1 standard."

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2. Who is the certification program intended for?

The GreenSign Office v. 1.1 certification program is intended for office and administrative units of companies, organizations, and institutions (hereinafter referred to as "organizations"). In these organizations, primarily administrative, commercial, planning, organizational, managerial, or other office-based activities are performed to support the actual business purpose of the respective company. [1] The activities must be performed by at least 10 people (full-time equivalents). The determining factor for the applicability of the certification program is the use of the unit to be certified as an office or administrative area, and not the economic activity of the respective organization. The certification program can therefore also be applied to office and administrative units of organizations whose core activities lie, for example, in the fields of production, industry, logistics, trade, healthcare, or other economic sectors.[1] The certification applies exclusively to office and administrative areas. Production, manufacturing, warehousing, logistics, lodging, hospitality, institutional food service, medical care, and other operational units are not included in the scope of GreenSign Office v. 1.1.

The GreenSign Office v. 1.1 certification program applies to both independently managed locations and centrally managed locations within corporate groups. The geographic scope of the program is limited to the member states of the European Union.

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[1] Leibniz Institute for Ecological Spatial Development (IÖR), based on the classification system of the Federal Statistical Office: *office and administrative buildings*. These include, among others, administrative buildings of industrial, commercial, transportation, and service companies, as well as public institutions.

3. What aspects are assessed in the certification program?

The criteria catalog of the GreenSign Office v. 1.1 certification program comprehensively addresses the three pillars of sustainability: ecology, social responsibility, and economy. The catalog is divided into the following nine core areas.

- Energy
- Water
- Waste
- Procurement
- Local Sourcing & Mobility
- Social Responsibility
- Quality Management & Sustainable Development
- Management & Communication
- Economic Responsibility

The list of core areas does not follow any external guidelines or standard framework, but was developed based on practical relevance for organizations.

The scoring system of the GreenSign Office v. 1.1 certification program assigns each criterion a score between 10 and 60 points. The score is based on the relative impact of the respective criterion on the corresponding sustainability pillar. These point values are determined based on a systematic assessment by an internal panel of experts of the scheme owner GreenSign Standard GmbH.

The maximum possible point values for the three pillars of sustainability reflect a distribution of 60% ecology, 20% economy, and 20% social responsibility. From the perspective of the GreenSign Office v. 1.1 certification program, this also reflects the political and societal perception of sustainability, with a significantly stronger focus on ecology.

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4. How is compliance with the certification program assessed?

Certification is carried out by an independent certification body that meets the qualifications and competencies required by the certification program, through a structured audit process:

1. Certification requires a contractual basis between the certification body and the organization. This contractual basis is established through a certification application submitted by the organization, the review of the application with regard to scope and risk, and the acceptance of the certification application by the certification body.
2. Upon acceptance of the certification application, the organization is required to complete the criteria checklist for the GreenSign Office v. 1.1 certification program and provide the necessary verification documents (self-disclosure).

3. After the self-disclosure is submitted, the certification body verifies the information provided. The verification is conducted by a lead auditor, who schedules an on-site visit, prepares the audit, reviews evidence, and documents findings.
4. On site, the lead auditor verifies the organization's information using the verification methods defined in the GreenSign Office v. 1.1 certification program, confirms criteria that have been met, rejects criteria that cannot be verified, and documents all findings.
5. Upon completion of the audit, an independent review is conducted by a second auditor who was not previously involved (the dual-control principle) to verify the completeness, traceability, and accuracy of the verification documentation.
6. After the review is completed, the results are evaluated according to the scoring system defined in the certification program. Based on this valuation, the certification body—through a committee or its management—makes the certification decision.

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5. When does an organization receive a certificate?

An organization receives the certificate if, as part of the certification process, it provides evidence that the requirements of the **GreenSign Office v. 1.1** certification program have been met.

When verifying a self-disclosure against the GreenSign Office v. 1.1 certification program, the certification body must systematically classify all nonconformities.

If there is a major nonconformity, a certificate cannot be granted. Major nonconformities (disqualifying criteria) include

- scoring less than 50% of the possible total points under the GreenSign Office v. 1.1 certification program
- failure to meet at least one of the mandatory criteria marked in the GreenSign Office v. 1.1 certification program

If no major non-conformities (disqualifying criteria) are identified, a certificate is granted. Other non-conformities (non-disqualifying criteria) are recorded in the audit report and do not influence the certification decision. Non-conformities (non-disqualifying criteria) include:

- scoring less than 100% of the possible total points for the GreenSign Office v. 1.1 certification program
- failure to meet criteria marked as non-mandatory in the GreenSign Office v. 1.1 certification program

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6. When is an organization permitted to display the certificate?

An organization may use the certification and the corresponding certification symbols, such as the GreenSign Office logo, as long as it holds a valid certificate and continues to meet the requirements of the certification program.

During the certification period, the certification body must require the organization to immediately report any business changes that could affect the certification decision.

The certification body must also ensure that reports from third parties regarding potential non-conformities of certified organizations can be received, documented, and investigated according to a defined procedure.

Use of the certification is subject to compliance with the applicable terms of use.

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7. When can a certificate be withdrawn?

A certificate must be withdrawn during its validity period if

- a scheduled surveillance audit determines that essential requirements of the GreenSign Office certification program are no longer being met
- an unscheduled surveillance audit is conducted based on a report from a third party, and this audit determines that relevant requirements of the GreenSign Office certification program are no longer being met
- an unscheduled surveillance audit is conducted based on a report from the organization, and this audit determines that relevant requirements of the GreenSign Office certification program are no longer being met.

In addition to the withdrawal of the certificate—and thus also the withdrawal of the rights to use the certificate and the corresponding marks—the GreenSign Office v. 1.1 certification program does not provide for the suspension or restriction of a certificate.